

Rabid Cat Confirmed In Dover Mobile Home Park

DOVER – A cat living at Kings Cliff Mobile Home Park in Dover has tested positive for rabies. The Division of Public Health (DPH) is working closely with Dover Animal Control who is helping to alert the neighborhood by going door-to-door with flyers. DPH has recommended to three individuals to begin post-exposure treatment to prevent rabies. Anyone who thinks they may have been bitten, scratched, or had saliva contact with a feral cat or cats in the Kings Cliff area should contact their healthcare provider, or call the DPH Office of Infectious Disease Epidemiology at 888-295-5156. The rabid cat found at Kings Cliff was a calico female, a mix of yellow, brown, black, and gray.

DPH reminds residents that rabies is endemic in Delaware. Residents should always take precautions against rabies by avoiding wild or unfamiliar animals and ensuring their pets are up-to-date with rabies shots.

Infection can occur through the bite or scratch of an infected animal or if saliva from such an animal gets into the eyes, nose, mouth or an opening in the skin. Rabies cannot be cured once symptoms appear. Therefore if a person is potentially exposed to an animal that tests positive for rabies, they will have to receive rabies shots (post-exposure prophylaxis) to prevent the disease from developing.

Since January 2015, DPH has performed rabies tests on 87 animals, nine of which were confirmed to be rabid, including this cat. DPH only tests animals for rabies when there is potential human exposure. This means there may be many more infected wild animals than suggested by these numbers.

Signs of rabies in animals include daytime activity in

normally nocturnal animals, wild animals approaching humans or other animals, and difficulty walking or moving. Some rabid animals may be very aggressive, while others may be very weak and have excessive salivation. Keep people and pets away from animals with any unusual behavior.

Take the following steps to avoid rabies:

- Do not feed stray animals.
- Never handle wild animals such as bats, raccoons, skunks, or foxes. This includes sick, injured or dead animals.
- If you wake up in a room with a bat present, seek medical attention regardless of the evidence of a bite or a scratch and call the DPH Office of Infectious Disease Epidemiology at 888-295-5156. If possible, trap the bat for testing. Do not release the bat.
- If bitten by an animal, place the wound under a running tap water and clean it thoroughly using soap for about five minutes. Exposed mucous membranes should be well rinsed with water. A virucidal antiseptic such as povidone-iodine, iodine tincture, aqueous iodine solution, or alcohol (ethanol) should be applied after washing. If there is no profuse bleeding, do not try to close up or stitch the wound. Seek medical attention immediately.
- Teach children never to approach or handle unfamiliar domestic or wild animals, even if they appear friendly. Never leave a child unattended with an animal, no matter how friendly or docile the animal appears.
- Keep pet vaccinations up-to-date. Delaware law requires that all dogs, cats, and ferrets be vaccinated against rabies.
- Keep cats and ferrets indoors and dogs on a leash under direct supervision. Homeless pets are vulnerable to rabies. Help reduce unwanted animals by spaying and neutering pets.

- Prevent bats and raccoons from entering homes by capping chimneys with screens and blocking openings in attics, cellars, and porches. Ensure trash cans have tight latching lids.

In an effort to promote 100 percent vaccination of all companion animals in Delaware, decrease human-wildlife conflicts, and promote responsible pet care-taking, DPH also recommends the following:

- By law, all cats, dogs, and ferrets over the age of 6 months must be vaccinated against rabies. DPH also recommends vaccinating against other diseases, such as distemper and the parvo virus.
- Pet cats should be kept indoors for their own safety and well-being. Cats can live happy lives indoors with proper enrichment and family play time. Cats that roam outside can be hit by cars, attacked by other animals, or can be exposed to parasites and diseases.
- If you care for cats living outdoors, ensure those cats are current on rabies vaccinations and are spayed or neutered. Spaying/neutering cats will eliminate the urge to fight, reducing the likelihood of disease transmission through bite injuries.
- Never feed wildlife intentionally or unintentionally with unsecured trash. If you care for cats living outdoors, always remove uneaten food after feeding times. This will prevent unwanted wildlife from being attracted to the food and wandering into places where people also reside. This will reduce the likelihood of wildlife attacks on humans or pets.
- Never approach or handle unfamiliar free-roaming cats. If there are free-roaming cats living in your area, contact a local organization with the expertise and training to trap the cats to have them vaccinated and spayed or neutered to improve neighborhood safety from disease and reduce unwanted litters.

For more information about rabies, visit dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/dpc/rabies.html.

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Rita Landgraf, Secretary

Jill Fredel, Director of Communications

302-255-9047, Cell 302-357-7498

Email: jill.fredel@delaware.gov

[Delaware Health and Social Services](#) – [Division of Public Health](#)